

VETERANS'

Winter 2005

Wellness

**Stop colon
cancer**
before it starts

Walk your way to
better health

**Beat the
winter
blues**

**Information
about Medicare
Part D**

**Important
news about
PTSD**



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About our mailing list

We make every effort to maintain an accurate mailing list. If you have any questions about the mailing list or would like to be added or deleted, please write to Editor, *Veterans' Wellness*, Network 2 Communications, 465 Westfall Road, Rochester, NY 14620, or e-mail Kathleen.Hider@med.va.gov.

Please be sure to include your phone number with all correspondence.

Wishing you a very happy holiday season and a wonderful new year



William F. Feeley,
Network Director

VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York is committed to helping veterans lead healthy and active lives. In the pages of *Veterans' Wellness* magazine, we offer numerous ways to help you stay fit mentally and physically. In the past year alone, we've worked to inform you by:

- adding health care experts to our Advisory Board
- providing Preventive Health Guidelines for disease screenings
- listing health and wellness classes offered at your local VA medical center

- supplying tips about exercising and eating right

We've also begun to include some wonderful success stories from veterans who are managing their health issues and living full lives. We feature these role models so you can see how a little prevention goes a long way toward improving your quality of life now and in the future.

I take great pride in our VA staff. They're truly providing the highest quality health care to veterans living in upstate New York. Our 2006 commitment to you is to:

- deliver excellence in health care quality
- achieve outstanding veteran satisfaction
- supply the best health care value
- provide easy access to health care

We'll also continue to bring you fresh articles on topics relevant to veterans' lives. In this issue, we highlight the health benefits of walking and the importance of colon cancer screenings. In addition, we take the confusion out of food labels, explain seasonal affective disorder and warn about the tipping point that says you're consuming too much alcohol.

This year, make a resolution to stay healthy by signing up for the My HealthVet program, which can help you keep track of your medical records and medications and learn more about current health care topics and trends. Enroll in the MOVE! program to control your weight—a key to preventing heart disease and diabetes. Partner with your VA primary health care team to follow the preventive health guidelines included in our fall issue and achieve your goals of leading a long and active life.

Best wishes for a safe and happy holiday season.

Sincerely,

William F. Feeley
William F. Feeley,
Network Director

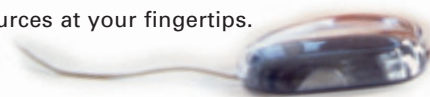
Health care at your fingertips

My HealthVet is an interactive Web site designed to empower veterans and their families to take a more active role in their health care. Through the site, registered users can:

- create a personal health record
- refill prescriptions online
- locate VA services
- monitor medical conditions
- learn more about treatments and diseases
- get information about benefits
- share information with family members and physicians

After the Web site was featured in the fall issue of *Veterans' Wellness*, participation by members of VA Healthcare Upstate New York more than doubled from 1,700 to almost 3,500.

To take advantage of My HealthVet, you need to register. Simply go to www.myhealth.va.gov and click on the "Register Now" link. In no time, you'll have the best health information resources at your fingertips.



Walking: A great way to exercise and stay healthy

Is your New Year's resolution to get trimmer, fitter or healthier? Walking is one of the safest and easiest things you can do. Studies show it cuts your risk of high blood pressure, heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis and more.

The Dietary Guidelines for Americans now include 30 to 60 minutes of moderate physical activity most days of the week. Walking is a great place to start—you only need healthy legs and feet, and good shoes.

Getting started

If you're currently inactive, Nazir Memon, M.D., medical consultant for VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York, advises you to "start low and go slow."

"Begin with a little exercise and increase it each day," he says. "It may take you months to work up to an hour, but once you start walking, it becomes addictive."

Try a 10-minute walk three times a week and gradually increase the time and distance. If you are over 50 or have a heart condition, talk to your VA health care provider before you begin. If you feel any chest pressure during exercise, stop immediately and contact your physician.

Counting paces

If you enjoy working toward a goal, a pedometer (a small device that counts your steps) may be right for you. VA provides pedometers through the MOVE! (Managing Overweight/Obesity for Veterans Everywhere) program. Simply clip the pedometer to your

waistband, push a button and let it count your steps.

For overall good health, aim for at least 10,000 steps each day. That equals about five miles, but you don't need to do it all at once. Your daily routine may use up 3,000 steps and you can add short bouts of activity throughout the day to reach 10,000.

One step at a time

Becoming fitter doesn't have to be a chore. Consider these ideas:

- Get off the bus a few blocks before your destination and walk.
- Squeeze in 10-minute walks in the morning, afternoon and evening.
- Recruit a friend to walk with.
- Add dance steps to your day.
- Don't use interoffice mail or call co-workers at the office. Deliver messages in person.
- Challenge yourself to find new ways to add steps to your day.
- Or do as Dr. Memon does and hit the malls. "Every day, I go to Lowe's and walk the aisles for about an hour," he says. "It's a safe place to walk, and the temperature is always right."

For more information about MOVE! ask your VA health care provider or go online to www.move.med.va.gov. ■

For more information about walking, log on to My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov.



Wayne walked off the weight



Wayne DeSorbe, of Stillwater

He dropped 56 pounds with the MOVE! program

Two knee replacements left retired police officer Wayne DeSorbe overweight and out of shape. After starting the MOVE! program in early 2004, Wayne was given a pedometer and a goal: Walk 10,000 steps a day.

At the time, he weighed 308 pounds and could barely walk. "When I started, I was walking about 1,800 to 2,000 steps a day," Wayne says. "It took at least six months to work up to my goal, but as I kept moving and losing weight, it kept getting easier."

A year and a half later, Wayne has dropped down to 252 pounds and walks six miles a day. The pedometer was key to his success.

"It really helps you keep track of what you're doing," the 59-year-old Stillwater resident says. "It helps you keep pushing to do a little better than the day before."

In addition to weight loss, Wayne has reaped health benefits from walking—control over his type 2 diabetes, reduced blood pressure and good cholesterol levels. Most of all, his pain is gone.

"My knees don't hurt anymore, and I climb mountains and go on hikes," he says. "The weight loss helped a lot, but walking definitely helped take the weight off."

Stop colon cancer

Early detection is the best protection

Colorectal cancer (cancers of the colon and rectum combined) is the third leading cause of cancer death in the United States, according to the American Cancer Society (ACS). Yet researchers estimate 90 percent of all colorectal cancer deaths could be avoided. With regular screening, most cases can be treated before they become cancerous.

Colorectal cancer usually begins as polyps, or tissue growths, in the colon or rectum (both part of the large intestine). If your doctor finds

Are you at risk?

You may have an increased chance of developing colorectal cancer if you:

- are over age 50
- have had certain types of polyps
- have a close family member who had colon cancer diagnosed before age 60
- have had colorectal cancer that was completely removed
- have long-standing chronic ulcerative colitis or Crohn's colitis
- are physically inactive
- eat a high-fat, high-calorie diet
- are overweight
- smoke or drink alcohol heavily
- are Jewish and of Eastern European descent (Ashkenazi Jewish)

In addition to making sure you get regular screening tests, ensure early detection by reporting any of the following symptoms to your VA health care provider:

- rectal bleeding
- blood in the stool
- a change in bowel habits, including diarrhea and constipation or a change in stool appearance
- a feeling that the bowel does not empty completely
- unexplained weight loss

before it starts



Michael Hare,
of Lockport

polyps during a screening, he or she will most likely remove them immediately. If the polyp is large, your doctor may perform a biopsy.

Exam time

Getting regular checkups may be the best way to prevent colorectal cancer. Early detection of abnormal cells allows for prompt treatment and makes curing colorectal cancer more likely.

If you're in good health and have no known risk factors (see "*Are you at risk?*"), the ACS recommends you get screened for colorectal cancer every year beginning at age 50. Those with risk factors for developing colorectal cancer should be screened earlier and more often. Your VA health care provider will help you decide which combination of screenings is best for you:

A digital rectal exam performed every year. During this test, the doctor uses a gloved, lubricated finger to feel for abnormalities of the prostate or rectum.

A fecal occult blood test conducted once a year. This simple at-home test reveals whether any blood is in the stool. Special cards are smeared with a stool sample and returned to the physician or lab.

A flexible sigmoidoscopy performed every five years. During this outpatient procedure, a doctor uses a thin, flexible tube with a light and tiny camera to look for abnormal areas in the lower part of the large intestine.

A barium enema once every

five to 10 years. During this procedure, the doctor inserts a liquid containing barium into the rectum and colon. Barium, a silver-white metallic compound, helps to show the image of the lower gastrointestinal tract on an X-ray.

A colonoscopy performed once every 10 years. This examination involves viewing the inside of the colon and rectum using a thin, lighted tube. If your doctor sees polyps or other abnormal tissue during the procedure, he or she can remove the growth for examination under a microscope.

A proactive approach

Paying attention to a few aspects of your health can dramatically cut your cancer risk. Here are some steps you can take:

Cut the fat and boost the fiber. Add more vegetables, fruits and whole grains to your diet. Fiber keeps the digestive process moving so cancer-causing wastes spend less time in the bowel.

Get moving. Taking a 20-minute walk three times a week may significantly lower your risk.

Limit alcohol. Having more than two drinks a day raises a person's risk.

Stop smoking. The habit plays a role in 30 percent of all cancers. If you're still lighting up, make every effort to stop. ■

For more information about colon cancer screenings, log on to My HealthVet at www.myhealth.va.gov.



An ounce of prevention

After turning 50, Michael Hare, of Lockport, knew it was time to get screened for colon cancer. "A close friend of mine's entire family—parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles—all died of colon cancer," he says. "It's important to get tested because if it's caught early, it can be cured."

Last September, he came to the Buffalo VA for a flexible sigmoidoscopy, which revealed two polyps. A few weeks later, he returned to have the polyps removed during a colonoscopy.

Throughout the test, he was partially sedated but still awake enough to watch the procedure on the monitor. "The doctor showed me the polyps, and I watched as he removed them," Michael explains. "It didn't hurt. I felt a little pressure at times, but it was mostly painless."

The worst part, he says, was the anticipation. The best part: Knowing he's cancer free. "I feel that if there is something wrong, I want to know about it right away while there is still time to fix it," he says.

His advice to other veterans: "See your doctor now, before it's too late. The service at VA is excellent. I was very impressed."

Don't be a 'no-show'

Be a buddy to your fellow vet: Next time you can't make your health care appointment, call and let us know as soon as possible. By canceling your visit, you're helping your fellow veterans get the appointments they need faster.

From label to table

Taking the confusion out of the grocery aisle



You're in the grocery store, ready to fill your shopping cart with healthy, tasty food for the holidays. Yet when you look at food labels, you get confused.

What is the difference between low-fat and reduced-fat? Low-sodium and very low sodium? Even the most health conscious of shoppers can feel like giving up.

Fortunately, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration regulates most food claims to ensure the terms used by food manufacturers mean the same things from label to label—which can help you make smarter food choices. So, what do the claims really mean? Check out the chart below for a translation of common terms and how to use that information in a healthy diet. ■



What it says	What it means per serving	What your daily intake should be
calorie-free	less than 5 calories	Calories: 1,600 to 2,800, depending on age, gender and daily activities
low-calorie	40 calories or less	
fat-free	less than 0.5 grams (g) of fat or saturated fat	Fat: 20% to 30% of total calories
low-fat	3 g or less of total fat	
saturated fat free	less than 0.5 g of saturated fat and less than 0.5 g of trans fatty acids	Saturated fat: no more than 10% of total calories
low saturated fat	1 g or less of saturated fat	
cholesterol-free	less than 2 milligrams (mg) of cholesterol	Cholesterol: no more than 300 mg
low-cholesterol	20 mg of cholesterol or less	
sodium-free or salt-free	less than 5 mg of sodium	Sodium (salt): 1,500 mg to 2,400 mg—but try to stay closer to the lower number
low-sodium	140 mg of sodium or less	
very low sodium	35 mg of sodium or less	
sugar-free	less than 0.5 g of sugar	Sugar: limited intake recommended
high-fiber	5 g or more of fiber	Fiber: 21 g to 38 g
good source of fiber	2.5 g to 4.9 g of fiber	
lean meat, poultry, seafood and game meats	less than 10 g of fat, 4.5 g of saturated fat or less, and less than 95 mg of cholesterol (per 100 g)	Meat, poultry, seafood: approximately 6 oz. per day
extra-lean meat, poultry, seafood and game meats	less than 5 g of fat, 2 g of saturated fat or less, and less than 95 mg of cholesterol (per 100 g)	



Mmm, mmm, great!

Heartwarming soups for winter days

As the days grow shorter, nothing says comfort food like a steaming crock of savory soup. A terrific and easy way to improve your family's diet, home-made soup can provide a filling, yet low-calorie meal that packs a lot of nutrients, protein, vitamins and more into one pot. Simmering your own soup requires little or no cooking oil, and you can control the fat and sodium content. Add plenty of antioxidant-rich vegetables and fiber-filled beans, and season with herbs and spices. For a "souper" supper, try one of these healthy recipes and serve with whole-grain bread. ■



Homemade gumbo

- 1 cup black-eyed peas, soaked and rinsed
- 1 cup brown rice
- 3 cups vegetable stock
- 2 small chili peppers, minced
- 4 whole green onions, sliced
- 1 Tbsp. fresh cilantro leaves
- 2 Tbsp. fresh parsley leaves
- 1/2 tsp. ground red (cayenne) pepper
- 1/8 tsp. ground black pepper
- 1/4 tsp. ground cumin
- 1 8-oz. can unsalted tomato sauce
- 1 14.5-oz. can unsalted peeled tomatoes
- 7 oz. frozen shrimp
- 10 oz. frozen, cut okra (about 4 cups fresh, sliced)
- 1 zucchini, halved and sliced
- 1 cup frozen corn
- 2 stalks celery (about 1 cup)
- 1/2 large sweet red pepper (about 1/2 cup)
- 1/2 large sweet green pepper (about 1/2 cup)
- 2 tsp. lime zest
- 1/2 tsp. salt

Tip: Add 1 cup cooked chicken to this vegetable-shrimp gumbo for a meatier soup.

Simmer black-eyed peas and brown rice in stock with chili peppers, green onions, cilantro, parsley, red pepper, black pepper and cumin until peas are tender (about one hour). Add remaining ingredients. Cook about 30 minutes, until vegetables are tender.

Serves 10. Per serving: 182 calories, 11 g protein, 2 g fat, 26 g cholesterol, 8 g fiber, 185 mg sodium

Spinach pasta soup

- 4 cups chicken broth (homemade or commercial low-sodium variety)
- 1/2 cup water
- 1/4 cup plus 1 Tbsp. no-salt-added tomato paste
- 1/2 tsp. grated lemon zest (optional)
- 1/4 cup orzo or pastina
- 6 cups chopped fresh spinach, leaves only, patted dry (about 8 oz.) or 1/2 of 10-oz. package frozen, chopped spinach, thawed and well drained
- 2 green onions, sliced (about 1/4 cup)
- 1/4 tsp. pepper
- 1/4 tsp. salt

In a medium saucepan over medium-high heat, combine broth, water, tomato paste and lemon zest. Whisk until smooth. Bring to a boil. Stir in pasta. Reduce heat to medium and cook for 5 to 7 minutes, or until pasta is tender. Stir in spinach and green onions and cook for 2 to 3 minutes. To serve, stir in pepper and salt.

Serves 4. Per serving: 95 calories, 4 g protein, 1 g fat, 15 g carbohydrates, 3 g fiber, 222 mg sodium

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A glossary for the savvy consumer

► **Reduced or less** in front of the words fat, cholesterol, sodium or sugar means the food item contains at least 25 percent less of that ingredient than its original version.

► **Light** on the label has several meanings: (1) The food has one-third fewer calories or half the fat of the original version or (2) the food has at least one-half fewer milligrams of sodium than that of the original. Beware, however, of instances when the food's *texture* and *color* are being described as "light," as in "light olive oil" and "light and fluffy." In cases such as these, *light* does not describe nutrient content.

► **High** describes a food with 20 percent or more of the government-recommended daily value of a nutrient.

► **Good source** means a food has 10 percent to 19 percent of the government-recommended daily value of a nutrient.

► **More** describes food that contains more than 10 percent of the government-recommended daily value of a nutrient. The terms *fortified*, *enriched*, *added*, *extra* and *plus* may be used instead of more.

Drinking in the danger zone

How much alcohol is too much?

For many people, alcohol is a social thing. You meet friends for drinks, have a few beers at the game or drink wine with dinner. Others use it to relax after a stressful day, loosen up at parties or calm down after an argument.

Sometimes alcohol use crosses the line into risky drinking. Not quite alcoholism, risky drinking occurs when alcohol causes problems in your life. Its signs include trouble at work, at home or with the law; drinking more than you intend to; or simply not functioning at your best because of your drinking.

Even if it doesn't cause outward problems, heavy drinking can harm your health. "Alcohol affects all the organs in the body," says Mary Schohn, Ph.D., network clinical coordinator for behavioral health. "Once you drink past the recommended levels, it can cause problems."

Benefits and risks

While several studies extol the heart-health benefits of moderate drinking, in excess it can increase your risk of heart disease, high

blood pressure, liver disease, diabetes and certain cancers. Alcohol can also cause insomnia, make psychological problems worse and interact or interfere with medications you take.

"Drinking within regular levels has some health benefits, but drinking too much is clearly harmful," Dr. Schohn says.

Moderate drinking is defined as one drink a day for a woman or two drinks a day for a man, and no more than seven drinks a week for a woman or 14 drinks a week for a man. In general, a 12-ounce bottle of beer, a 4-ounce glass of wine or a 1.5-ounce shot of 80-proof spirits are considered one drink. ■

For more information about risky drinking, log on to [My HealthVA at www.myhealth.va.gov](http://MyHealthVA.gov).



Troubling patterns

Are you wondering if you or a loved one might have a drinking problem? Check the boxes that apply to you or your loved one:

- ☐ No matter how many promises you make to yourself about cutting down, you frequently wind up under the influence of alcohol.
- ☐ You're uncomfortable when alcohol is not available.
- ☐ Before the evening begins, you have extra drinks that others don't know about.
- ☐ You regret things you've said or done when under the influence.
- ☐ You handle all social celebrations with alcohol.
- ☐ You drink alcohol after a confrontation or an argument.
- ☐ When faced with a problem, your immediate reaction is to drink.
- ☐ Drinking changes your personality from shy to outgoing, or vice versa.
- ☐ You need more alcohol than you used to, to get the same effect.
- ☐ You remember how last night began but not how it ended, so you're worried about your mental health.
- ☐ You've missed work or other obligations because of your abusive behavior, or you've been arrested for driving under the influence.
- ☐ You're angry or alarmed when others mention you might have a problem.
- ☐ Your hands shake in the morning.
- ☐ You feel alone, scared, miserable and depressed.

If you can check even one box, you may have a problem. Talk to your VA health care provider.



Battling the winter blues

**Seasonal affective disorder
can sap your energy**

Winter was never Carol Barkalow's favorite time of year. The cold weather and dark days always left her feeling blah. "I remember not feeling well in the winter," the 46-year-old Clifton Park resident says. "But I had to get up and go to work—in the Army you don't have a choice."

Throughout her 22 years in the service, she found herself going through the motions from the end of fall to the beginning of spring. Not until she retired two years ago did she dis-

cover her mood had a name: seasonal affective disorder, or SAD.

SAD affects about 10 percent to 20 percent of Americans, most of them women who live in northern areas, where short winter days mean less exposure to sunlight. The cause of this type of depression isn't

known, but researchers believe that the eye's sensitivity to light plays a role.

People with SAD may have retinas that don't work as they should, making it impossible for their eyes to absorb enough light from short winter days. A lack



Carol Barkalow,
of Clifton Park

of light entering the eye may cause changes in body chemistry that trigger depression, daytime drowsiness, extreme weight gain, difficulty awakening in the morning and carbohydrate cravings.

Carol felt exhausted all the time. With a limited schedule of commitments, she'd lie on the couch in the afternoon, feeling paralyzed. "I realized my retirement adjustment was a big deal," she says. She went to see a Vet Care counselor who realized she might have SAD.

SAD is treated with light therapy, which involves exposing the eyes to additional light for anywhere from 30 minutes to two hours a day. The light can come from the sun or from a light box, which provides between five and 20 times the light of an ordinary lamp.

Patients spend a half hour to two hours each morning sitting with their faces about 18 inches from the box, which measures about two square feet. They can read or eat, as long as they face the light and keep their eyes open.

For many patients, light therapy relieves symptoms within two weeks. However, treatment must continue all winter long or symptoms will return.

Carol received a light box through VA this fall, and for the first time she's enjoying an active winter. "In the Army, I did what I had to do, even though I didn't want to," she says. "With light therapy, I have the energy to exercise in the morning and stay busy in the afternoon. It has made a big difference."

If you think you may be suffering from SAD or depression, talk to your VA primary care physician. ■

For more information about seasonal affective disorder, log on to My HealtheVet at www.myhealth.va.gov.



Important information for veterans with post traumatic stress disorder

Some of you may have read in the paper that VA's Inspector General was planning to review 72,000 post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) cases in which the veteran was awarded full disability or "individual unemployability" due to PTSD between 1999 and 2004. Last month, VA announced the review has been called off.

"Not all combat wounds are caused by bullets and shrapnel," the Honorable R. James Nicholson, Secretary of Veterans Affairs, says in a November 10 news release. "We have a commitment to ensure veterans with PTSD receive compassionate, world-class health care and appropriate disability compensation determinations."

In May 2005, VA reported an examination of a random sample of 2,100 PTSD cases revealed one-quarter of the files lack sufficient documentation of the verified stressor (psychologically traumatic event). The problems with these files appear to be administrative in nature, such as missing documents, and not fraud.

"In the absence of evidence of fraud, we're not going to put our veterans through the anxiety of widespread review of their disability claims," Nicholson says. "Instead, we're going to improve our training for VA personnel who handle disability claims and toughen administrative oversight."

Questions regarding veterans' benefits: Call **1-800-827-1000**, Monday to Friday, from 9 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., and a counselor will be available to assist you; or log on to **www.va.gov** and click on "Ask a question."

Get your DD-214 online

The National Personnel Records Center (NPRC) is working to make it easier for veterans to obtain documents from their military files. A new Web site called eVetRecs offers veterans and their next of kin quicker access to key portions of their military records, including the DD Form 214 often requested for employment purposes.

The new Web-based application was designed to provide better service by eliminating mailroom-processing time. NPRC currently handles 4,000 requests a day and is digitalizing Official Military Personnel Files to increase efficiency for a speedier response. Despite recent rumors, there are no plans to eliminate paper archives.

To request a document, log on to <http://vetrecs.archives.gov>. Requests typically take 10 days or less to fulfill.

Get the best care possible

Are you a veteran who's receiving care from both a VA provider and a private community health care provider? If so, it's important that both your VA provider and your community provider coordinate your treatment plan, including medications, treatments and diagnostic tests.

To ensure this happens, provide your VA provider with copies of the following information:

- the community provider's name, address and phone number
- a list of prescriptions and supporting notes
- results of blood work and other tests

To help you compile this information, VA offers a Provider Prescription Check List and a Patient Prescription Check List wallet card. Ask about them at your next visit.

VA drug co-pays to go up \$1

Co-payments for outpatient medicine prescribed through VA medical facilities will rise by \$1 as of January 1. The increase to \$8 from \$7 for a 30-day supply of prescription drugs is required by federal law, which bases VA's co-pays for outpatient prescriptions on increases in the Medical Consumer Price Index.

Veterans who have an injury or illness connected with their military service resulting in a 50 percent or greater disability are not affected by the increase.

Not all prescription drugs will see an increase. Outpatient medications for the treatment of a service-connected disability or illnesses related to service and medications for veterans who are 50 percent disabled or more or whose annual income does not exceed their VA pension are not subject to a co-pay.

free VA Wellness Programs

VA Healthcare Network Upstate New York is dedicated to improving the health of our veterans. To help you stay healthy and informed, we are pleased to offer the following wellness programs designed especially for veterans. All programs are free. For more information including dates, times and locations, please call one of the numbers listed below between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m.

Stress Management

Individual counseling is available to help you manage your stress. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-5339
Bath (607) 664-4331
Buffalo (716) 862-8595
Canandaigua (585) 393-7252
Syracuse (315) 425-3485

Diabetes Management

This 12-month program helps veterans with diabetes develop self-management tools. The program provides tips on nutrition and exercise and how to reduce your risk of diabetes complications. *For more information, call:*

Albany, contact your primary care provider
Bath (607) 664-4614 or (607) 664-4626
Batavia (585) 297-1000, ext. 72555
Buffalo (716) 862-8844
Canandaigua (585) 393-7109 or (585) 393-7126
Syracuse (315) 425-2432

Understanding Your Medications

Individual counseling is offered for veterans who need help managing medications. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-5780
Bath (607) 664-4413, then press 2
Buffalo (716) 862-8881 or (716) 862-3223
Canandaigua (585) 393-7122, then press 2
ROPC (585) 463-2697, then press 2
Syracuse (315) 425-4400, ext. 52026, then press 2

Depression and the Elderly

Individual and group counseling is available to help veterans deal with late-life depression. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-5339
Bath (607) 664-4301
Buffalo (716) 862-8595
Canandaigua (585) 393-7250
Syracuse (315) 425-3485

Dementia Care Services

Held quarterly in Albany and monthly in Buffalo, the workshop covers a variety of dementia-related topics of interest to patients and caregivers. *For more information, call:*

Albany (518) 626-6051
Buffalo (716) 862-3237
Canandaigua (585) 393-7901

New Patient Orientation

Rochester Outpatient Clinic

Learn how VA system works and how to access services. Includes information on pharmacy services, eligibility and mental health services. Can also be attended by existing patients for a refresher. *Held every other Friday afternoon. For dates and times, call Geri Wiess at (585) 463-2747.*

Ask the expert

THIS ISSUE'S EXPERT:

Fran Peters

Network Health Benefits Executive Manager

Q: Lately, I've received a lot of mailers telling me to sign up for Medicare Part D prescription drug coverage for seniors. With all the plans available, I'm starting to get confused. They say if I don't join now, I'll be penalized with higher premiums for life, but I already have prescription drug coverage through VHA that I'm very happy with. Do I need to sign up now?

A: As you've probably heard, Medicare will begin providing prescription drug benefits to seniors on January 1, 2006. For most people, joining now means you'll pay a lower monthly premium. Those who don't sign up now will have to pay a higher premium if they do so at a later date.

However, as an enrollee in VA health care, you will not be subjected to a higher premium if you decide to join a Medicare drug plan later. If you change your mind, you can enroll during the annual open-enrollment period between November 15 and December 31 each year.

In deciding whether to enroll in a Medicare drug plan at this time, you may want to consider several factors. For instance, you may benefit from Medicare Part D if you live in a nursing home and your health care and prescription benefits are provided through the facility and not the VA, or if you don't live close to a VA Medical Center and prefer to get your medications from a local pharmacy rather than by mail.



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Expires 1-16-06

Reaching us is easy

www.va.gov/visns/visn02

VA medical centers

Albany

113 Holland Avenue
Albany, NY 12208
(518) 626-5000

Batavia

222 Richmond Avenue
Batavia, NY 14020
(585) 297-1000

Bath

76 Veterans Avenue
Bath, NY 14810
(607) 664-4000

Buffalo

3495 Bailey Avenue
Buffalo, NY 14215
(716) 834-9200

Canandaigua

400 Fort Hill Avenue
Canandaigua, NY 14424
(585) 394-2000

Syracuse

800 Irving Avenue
Syracuse, NY 13210
(315) 425-4400

Community-based outpatient clinics

Auburn

Auburn Memorial Hospital
17 Lansing Street
Auburn, NY 13021
(315) 255-7002

Bainbridge

109 North Main Street
Bainbridge, NY 13733
(607) 967-8590

Binghamton

425 Robinson Street
Binghamton, NY 13001
(607) 772-9100

Carthage

3 Bridge Street
Carthage, NY 13619
(315) 493-4180



- ▲ VA Medical Center
- VA Outpatient Clinic
- ◆ VISN 2 Network Office



Catskill

Greene Medical Bldg.
159 Jefferson Heights
Catskill, NY 12414
(518) 943-7515

Clifton Park

1673 Route 9
Clifton Park, NY 12065
(518) 383-8506

Cortland

1129 Commons Avenue
Cortland, NY 13045
(607) 662-1517

Dunkirk

The Resource Center
325 Central Avenue
Dunkirk, NY 14048
(716) 366-2122

Elizabethtown

P.O. Box 277
Park Street
Elizabethtown, NY 12932
(518) 873-3295

Elmira

Health Services Bldg.
200 Madison Avenue
Suite 2E
Elmira, NY 14901
(877) 845-3247

Fonda

Camp Mohawk Plaza
Route 30A
Fonda, NY 12068
(518) 853-1247

Glens Falls

84 Broad Street
Glens Falls, NY 12801
(518) 798-6066

Ithaca

VA Outpatient Clinic
10 Arrowwood Drive
Ithaca, NY 14850
(607) 274-4680

Jamestown

The Resource Center
890 East Second Street
Jamestown, NY 14701
(716) 661-1447

Kingston

63 Hurley Avenue
Kingston, NY 12401
(845) 331-8322

Lackawanna

Our Lady of Victory
Family Care Center
227 Ridge Road
Lackawanna, NY 14218
(716) 822-5944

Lockport

Ambulatory Care Center
5875 S. Transit Road
Lockport, NY 14094
(716) 433-2025

Malone

183 Park Street
Suite 3
Malone, NY 12953
(518) 481-2545

Massena

1 Hospital Drive
Massena, NY 13662
(315) 769-4253

Niagara Falls

VA Outpatient Clinic
2201 Pine Avenue
Niagara Falls, NY 14301-2300
(800) 223-4810

Olean

465 North Union Street
Olean, NY 14760-2658
(716) 373-7709

Oswego

Seneca Hills Health
Services Center
County Route 45A
Oswego, NY 13126
(315) 343-0925

Plattsburgh

43 Durkee Street
Plattsburgh, NY 12901
(518) 561-8310

Rochester

465 Westfall Road
Rochester, NY 14620
(585) 463-2600

Rome

125 Brookley Road
Bldg. 510
Rome, NY 13441
(315) 334-7100

Schenectady

1322 Gerling Street
Sheridan Plaza
Schenectady, NY 12308
(518) 346-3334

Troy

Troy Primary Care Practice
295 River Street
Troy, NY 12180
(518) 274-7707

Warsaw

Wyoming County
Community Hospital
400 N. Main Street
Warsaw, NY 14569
(585) 344-3355

Wellsville

Jones Memorial Hospital
Health Care Center
13 Loder Street
Wellsville, NY 14895
(585) 596-2056

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Wellness

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465 Westfall Road
Rochester, NY 14620

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